

THE UNITED STATES

Reading Essentials and Study Guide 3

The Americans

Key Terms

colony overseas settlement tied to a parent country

representative democracy government in which voters choose leaders who make and enforce laws.

federal republic power is divided between national and state governments, with a president who leads the nation

secede to withdraw from the national government

immigrant person who moves into a new country to live

rural countryside

urban city

suburb smaller community surrounding a larger city

Drawing From Experience

How would you describe your family as Americans? Do you live in the countryside, a town, or a city? Did your parents, grandparents, or great grandparents come from another country? Do you speak a language other than English?

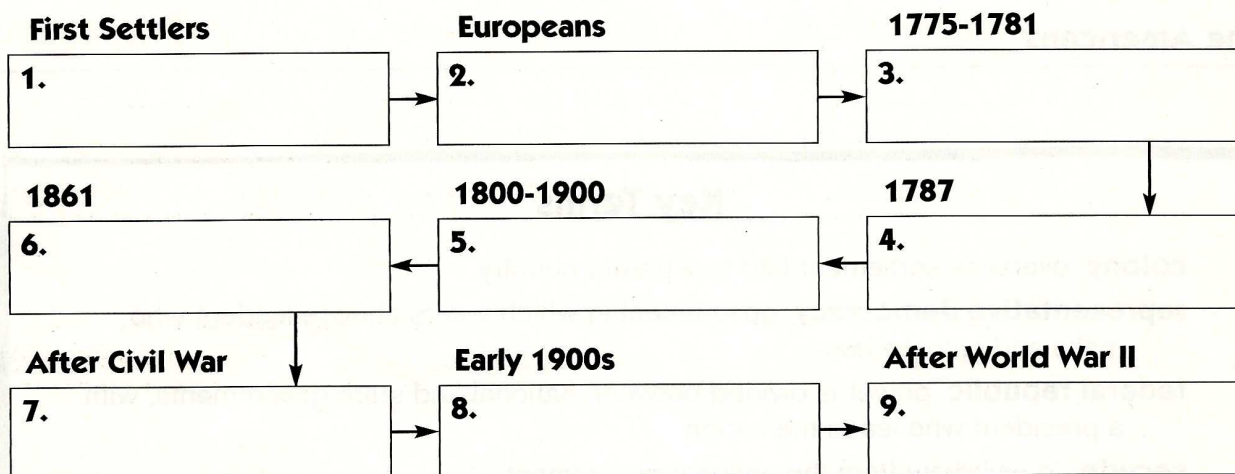
The last section discussed the economic regions of the United States. In this section, you will learn about the diversity of the American people.

Organizing Your Thoughts

Use the diagram on the next page to help you take notes. The United States has a rich history. Write one key fact about each topic or time period listed above each box on the diagram.

THE UNITED STATES

Reading Essentials and Study Guide 3 (continued)



Read to Learn

Introduction

Americans have come from many lands. Many came here for freedom. Americans enjoy the freedom to do, say, or think whatever they want. People continue to come for economic opportunity. They hope to enjoy better lives.

10. Why have many people come to the United States?

A Rich History

Experts think the first people came here from Asia. Much of the water was frozen in huge sheets of ice then. As a result, the oceans were lower. A land bridge linked Asia and Alaska. Animals crossed the bridge. People who hunted them followed. The people spread over North and South America. They developed different ways of life, using resources in their area. Today their descendants are called Native Americans.

When Europeans arrived, they set up **colonies**. These are overseas settlements tied to a parent country. The French set up trading posts around the Great Lakes. The Spanish settled in Florida, Georgia, and the southwest. The British settled along the Atlantic coast.

In the mid-1700s, the people of the British colonies started to see themselves as Americans. They did not like how the British government

THE UNITED STATES**Reading Essentials and Study Guide 3 (continued)**

treated them. From 1775 to 1781, the Americans fought a war to free themselves from British rule. With the help of France and Spain, the Americans won.

The 13 former British colonies became the first 13 states. Each state wrote a state constitution. A *constitution* is a plan of government. In 1787 a group of American leaders wrote the United States Constitution. The U.S. Constitution is the basis for all our laws. It explains how our government is set up and works. This document has been used as a model by many countries.

The U.S. Constitution went into effect in 1789. However, it has grown and changed over the years. The Constitution can be changed by adding *constitutional amendments*. Amendments provide a peaceful way of changing the laws of the government. The first ten amendments are called the Bill of Rights. The Bill of Rights lists freedoms promised to all individual Americans. These include freedom of speech and religion.

Our government is based on democracy, or rule by the people. The United States has a representative democracy. In a **representative democracy**, voters choose leaders. These leaders make and enforce the laws. The United States is also a **federal republic**. This means that power is divided between national and state governments. A president leads the national government.

From 1800 to 1900, the United States grew from 13 to 45 states. The country reached all the way to the Pacific Ocean. Millions of people came from other lands to live here. People of the South based their economy on slavery. Slavery divided the country. In 1861 several Southern states **seceded**, or left the national government. The North and South fought the Civil War for four years. The North won. The Southern states returned to the Union, and slavery ended.

The economy grew after the Civil War. Railroads crossed the land. Factories sprang up. Opportunity attracted another wave of **immigrants**, or people who move to a new country to live.

During the early 1900s, the United States became one of the world's leading economies. Cars rolled off assembly lines. Electricity became common. The telephone and radio entered daily life. Two World Wars were fought in the first half of the twentieth century. American factories built tanks and airplanes. American soldiers helped win the wars.

After World War II, the United States became a world leader. Countries throughout the world bought American products. American culture spread. At home, women, African Americans, and Hispanic Americans fought for equal rights.

THE UNITED STATES**Reading Essentials and Study Guide 3 (continued)**

Americans have normally felt safe in their country. However, on September 11, 2001, terrorists attacked New York City and Washington, D.C. This tested Americans' feelings of security. A new department, the Department of Homeland Security, was created to protect the nation from terrorist attacks.

11. What three European countries first settled the Americas?

One Out of Many

The United States has about 292 million people. It is third—after China and India—in the number of people. Americans have a high standard of living. Most Americans have enough food. Americans live an average of 77 years. Advances in medicine have helped people live longer.

Almost three-fourths of Americans come from European ethnic groups. About 12 percent are from African American ethnic groups. Hispanics are the fastest-growing ethnic group. Many new immigrants come from China, India, and other Asian countries. Native Americans form the smallest ethnic group.

English is the main language in the United States. You can hear many languages on American streets, however. Religion has always been an important influence on American life. The main religion is some form of Christianity. Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism are also practiced.

At one time, America was all **rural**, or countryside areas. Now it is a nation of **urban**, or city, people. Many Americans have moved to **suburbs**. These are smaller communities surrounding a larger city. The fastest-growing areas are in the Sunbelt. These are states in the South and Southwest.

12. What kinds of things are part of a high standard of living?

American Culture

Early American artists used materials around them to create art. Native Americans made pottery from clay. Later artists reflected the beauty of the land. Georgia O'Keeffe painted the colorful deserts of the South-

THE UNITED STATES

Reading Essentials and Study Guide 3 (continued)

west. Thomas Eakins painted scenes from city life.

One theme in American writing is the experiences of ethnic groups here. Langston Hughes and Toni Morrison wrote about African American experiences. Amy Tan described the lives of Chinese Americans. A second theme focuses on the land and history of regions. Mark Twain wrote about life on the Mississippi. Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote about New England.

Americans spend their free time in many different ways. They read books, use computers, and watch television. They may bike, ski, and play basketball or soccer. Many enjoy watching spectator sports such as football. Millions travel to national parks. These lands are set aside to protect wilderness and wildlife.

13. What are two themes in American writing?
